

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2006

Present: Candace Havens (Chair), David Koses (Planning), Sgt. Norcross (Police), Christine Samuelson (Aldermanic Representative), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer)
Aldermen present: Pres. Baker, Ald. Danberg, Harney, Hess-Mahan, Johnson, Linsky, Merrill, Sangiolo, and Weisbuch

#217-05 ALD. JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT, LINSKY, GENTILE, HESS-MAHAN, SALVUCCI requesting an analysis and discussion of traffic mitigation possibilities during the morning and evening commuter rush-hour on the section of Crafts Street between Waltham Street and Walnut Street. (Wards 1 and 3).

HELD 11/17/05

ACTION: RECOMMEND RECOMMITTAL TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE 5-0

NOTE: Clint Schuckel reported that the signal at North Street is sensitive to traffic demand and functions properly. There are 240 cars exiting Albemarle Road at the AM peak and 107 at the PM peak (school is already out by then). It appears that people driving east avoid turning left at the light at North Street (25 left turns/hour) by taking a left on Albemarle Road (160/hour). Note that this section of Crafts Street is classified as a minor arterial and has a daily volume of 15,800 vehicles. Through traffic on Crafts Street is between 650 and 850 vehicles per hour at peak times. Speed studies showed that 85% of people travel around 36 mph and 95% drive at 40 mph or less.

Previous ideas to reroute traffic over the brook and add stop lights are relatively costly. Some lower cost alternatives include reconfiguring the Crafts/North Streets intersection to slow cars at the corner and reduce the length of the crosswalk; the walk time at the intersection is based on the longest crosswalk in the intersection and shortening it would reduce walk time and give some time back to vehicles for clearing the intersection. The crosswalk would need to be moved 40-50 feet to the west and sidewalks reconfigured to do this. At present, the existing crosswalk to the east exits onto a driveway and could be improved in redesign of the corner. Mr. Schuckel suggested slowing traffic by narrowing the lanes with a painted median in the center of Crafts Street as it approaches Albemarle Road from the east. In response to a question from Ald. Linsky, Clint Schuckel said it is likely that right turns on red were prohibited at the North Street/ Crafts Street intersections to protect pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Ald. Hess-Mahan and Johnson said students cross Crafts Street at two points to get to Horace Mann Elementary and Day Middle School, but not often on North Street. Ald. Johnson also noted that many people ignore the prohibition of right turns on red northbound onto North Street from westbound Crafts Street. She added that eliminating left turns onto northbound Albemarle Road from eastbound Crafts Street would force cars to turn left at the North Street signal and reduce conflicts at the Albemarle/Crafts intersection.

Ald. Hess-Mahan described the complexity of turning movements throughout the area; parents deliver their children to the Fessenden School, Horace Mann Elementary, and Day Middle School and have many possible points of conflict which often encourages them to detour through nearby residential areas.

Resident Sharon Kelly said people tend to take risks in the area and drive too fast past Gath pool. Lanes are not well-marked and people cross where there are no crosswalks, such as from Day Middle School to Walnut Street. She said getting out of California Street is hazardous. She noted that clearing the appropriate sidewalks of snow would help matters.

Sgt. Norcross suggested right turns only for cars traveling northbound and southbound on Albemarle Road to eliminate U-turns across Crafts Street and generally minimize conflicts created by more complex movements at the intersection. David Koses concurred, although he expressed concerns about diverting traffic onto residential streets.

Clint Schuckel felt certain improvements should be initiated together. Relocating left turns from eastbound Crafts Street to North Street would require a green arrow at North Street and would be best if accompanied by reconfiguration of the curb face at that intersection to shorten the crosswalk and reduce walk time. He cautioned that care should be taken not to direct too many cars to the left turn lane at North Street. About 25 cars per peak hour travel eastbound on Crafts Street now turn left onto North Street, and eliminating left turns at Albemarle Road would add 160 more cars per hour to the light at North Street. If left turns are prohibited from Albemarle Road onto Crafts Street from the north and south, this will add yet another 150 cars to the left turn lane at North Street; he recommended taking one change at a time to make sure the left turn lane isn't overburdened. The street is 39-40 feet wide and there is enough room to create a third lane for left turns in this area. In response to a question, he confirmed that traffic on North Street is greater than on Albemarle Road and a stop light at this location is preferred; a light at Albemarle Road would be trickier because the street is divided over Cheesecake Brook.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend review by the Public Safety and Transportation Committee of the following changes:

- (1) No left turn restriction from eastbound Crafts Street onto northbound Albemarle Road;
- (2) Repainting the center turn lane at the Crafts Street/ Albermarle Road so to create a left turn lane for vehicles traveling westbound on Crafts Street to turn southbound onto Albemarle Road; and;
- (3) Addition of green arrow from eastbound Crafts onto northbound North Street.

#336-05 BARBARA W. TANZER, 150 Grant Avenue requesting a speed reduction to 25 mph on Grant Avenue between Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue.
(Ward 6)

ACTION: **NAN 5-0**

NOTE: Clint Schuckel pointed out that the current speed limit on this portion of Grant Street is 25 mph, but is not posted; he will have appropriate signs installed.
The Traffic Council voted to recommend no action on this item (5-0)

#384-05 ALD. HARNEY requesting “No Parking” on one side of Central Street between Commonwealth Avenue and Grove Street, Auburndale. (Ward 4)

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED 3-2 (Koses, Havens opposed)**

NOTE: Ald. Harney presented some photographs of this narrow street that show cars parked on both sides during the school day, often on the shoulder of the road. He also presented some letters from residents, who had varying views about the safety and access issues and how to address them. He spoke with Tom Koerber from Lasell College, who supported restrictions to assure neighborhood safety and who indicated there is adequate parking for students on-campus.

Clint Schuckel reported that Central Street is 22 feet wide. He observed 9-14 cars on recent site visits; most cars were parked between Maple Street and Commonwealth Avenue and fewer were parked closer to Grove Street. There is a two-hour time restriction on the easterly half of Central Street (both sides). He recommended no parking be allowed on the southerly side from Commonwealth Avenue to Grove Street and keeping the two-hour restriction on the northerly side.

Candace Havens referenced a letter from Eugene Fabio, 11 Central Street, who supports no parking on the “odd” side of Central Street.

Allen Schofield, 75 Central Street, concurred there is a need to keep streets safe for the neighborhood; he expressed fears that restricting the easterly end of the street would push the problem west. He thought the school needs to work with the students to discourage them from driving to school and cited problems with speeding and trash in the neighborhood.

Richard Dana, 35 Central said his car was hit and he has had trouble getting out of his driveway. He also noted speeding and safety as concerns and thought parking should be allowed only on the north side.

Russell Yashinsky, 43 Central Street believes students park on Central Street while they attend classes and that a one-hour time limit would be more useful than the current two-hour restriction.

Ald. Sangiolo urged the Traffic Council to recommend the least restrictive means of addressing the problem. Ald. Samuelson thought that a daytime restriction might be the most conservative.

Sgt. Norcross suggested “No Parking from 7 am to 6 pm” since the existing two-hour restriction runs from 7 am to 6 pm. He also noted that both the one-hour and two-hour restrictions are a challenge for enforcement.

David Koses and Candace Havens felt that the narrowness of the street dictated maintaining a “No Parking” zone at all times on one side of the street for public safety reasons.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend “No Parking” on the south side of Central Street from Grove Street to Commonwealth Avenue from 7 am – 6 pm, Monday-Friday (3-2, Koses and Havens opposed). Note: there are no proposed changes to the restrictions on the north side of the street.

#100-06
(225-92)

ACTION:
NOTE:

ALD. SANGIOLO requesting amendment of parking restrictions on Auburn Street from south side, from Woodland Road to opposite Ash Street to permit shared use of on-street parking by businesses and commuters. (Ward 4)

APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0

Ald. Sangiolo said that in 1992, parking on this stretch of Auburn Street was restricted from 7-9 am and 4-6 pm to discourage commuter parking. However, signing has not been in place for many years and merchants have been accustomed to sharing the spaces with commuters. Signs recently were posted to enforce the existing laws and have eliminated all long-term parking from this area. She asked that at least the 4-6 pm restriction be eliminated so the area can be used more productively; merchants now are forced to park in the shorter term spaces closer to the shops that should be available for customers.

Clint Schuckel observed no parking in the restricted section and said the street can support long-term parking on one side only. In addition to the 7-9 am and 4-6 pm restrictions, there is also a one-hour time restriction on the books that is not posted. He recommended the restrictions be eliminated and that no parking be allowed on the north side of the street and on the south side between Woodland Road and the commuter parking lot entrance.

Rob Nahigian, 335 Auburn Street spoke on behalf of the merchants. He said that many of the merchants arrive at 7 am and used the spaces closest to the business district while commuters used the spaces closer to the entrance to the commuter rail. He felt that this worked well for all users and freed customer spaces near the shops and library.

David Koses noted that the existing commuter parking lot, owned by Mass Turnpike, is over-parked and not properly striped, but if MassPike improves it, some parkers would likely be displaced. This could impact usage of parking on the street. He suggested metering spaces on the west end of Auburn Street.

Candace Havens agreed long-term parking for commuters and employees should be metered along this stretch, but that it should be coordinated with metering of short-term spaces closest to the village. In the meantime, she agreed that removing the restrictions created better use of available parking for all concerned.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend:

- (1) rescinding the existing one-hour, 7-9 am, and 4-6 pm restrictions (5-0) between Ash Street and Woodland Road;
- (2) adding “No Parking” zone from Woodland Road to the entrance to the MassPike commuter parking lot on the south side of Auburn Street (5-0);
- (3) extending existing “No Parking” zone on the north side of Auburn Street, westerly to Woodland Road (5-0).

#122-06

ALD. BAKER requesting revisions to parking restrictions on Reservoir Avenue so that the existing one-hour limits apply to both sides (Ward 7)

ACTION:
NOTE:

APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0

Ald. Baker introduced the Brighams, Reservoir Avenue residents who were instrumental in coordinating installation of one of the City’s first neckdowns on their street. He pointed out that the restrictions on the street are inconsistent and confusing and should be revised to assure equal treatment of all parts of the street. One section of the street bears a significant amount of student parking in the winter months due to the lack of restrictions.

Clint Schuckel agreed that the overlaps in regulations were difficult to understand. These include: 1-hour parking from 8 am to 3 pm on Monday through Saturday and the northwesterly and easterly side; 1-hour parking from October 1 to April 30 on the easterly side; no restrictions on the southwesterly side.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend approval of one-hour parking from 8 am to 3 pm and from 3 pm to 10 pm from October 1 to April 30 on both sides of Reservoir Avenue between Beacon and Hammond Streets (5-0).

- #32-06 CANDACE HAVENS requesting consideration of long-term parking meters
1. On the west side of Centre Street between Tyler Terrace and Bowen Street
 2. On the south side of Lyman Street between Centre Street and Willow Street.

ACTION: **1. APPROVED AS AMENDED 4-0-1 (Koses abstaining)**
2. APPROVED 5-0

NOTE: Candace Havens presented an overview of findings of the Newton Centre Task Force Subcommittee on Parking and Traffic. The subcommittee's studies showed that the number of public and private parking spaces in the village center appears to be adequate overall, but that public parking is in higher demand and that the parking in "The Triangle" lot at Langley Road approaches 100% occupancy at peak times. Both merchants and residents have complained about the parking and traffic situation and merchant surveys cited lack of long-term parking for employees a problem. She noted that the Board recently approved a restructuring of meter rates and long-term meters are now 25 cents an hour and short-term meters are 50 cents an hour and rates in "The Triangle" will double. Additional long-term parking at a cheaper rate on the edges of the center will provide an attractive alternative for those who now feed meters in the most convenient customer spaces. It is hoped that this will also reduce traffic that is generated by customers circling the blocks in search of parking spaces at midday when parking demand peaks.

Clint Schuckel reviewed the conditions of the Centre and Lyman Streets where new meters are proposed. On Centre Street, he noted the width of the southbound lane is 24' and there is room for 8-12 parking spaces on the west side; he also recommended no parking on the west side of Centre Street where the street curves nearest Bowen Street to allow proper merging of traffic. On Lyman Street there is a two-hour restriction on the south side and no restriction on the north side. He said the street can support parking only on one side and recommended 7-8 meters on the south side and no parking near the driveways or on the north side.

David Koses was concerned that parking on Centre Street will increase congestion and block the visibility of cars turning off Tyler Terrace.

The Traffic Council discussed which side of Lyman Street would maximize the available parking. Clint Schuckel noted that the north side of the street has no sidewalk and the grade changes quickly, so it may be easier for people to put coins in meters from southerly spaces. Sgt Norcross also pointed out that trucks may unload on the back side of the buildings and clearance for them should be considered. Candace Havens reported the traffic volumes on Lyman Street are less than 600 vehicles per day and the lowest of all the surrounding streets in Newton Centre.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend approval of 12-hour meters with final layout to the approval of the City Traffic Engineer:

- (1) 8-12 spaces on the west side of Centre Street from Tyler Terrace to the crosswalk (4-0-1, Koses abstained).
- (2) 7-8 spaces on the south side of Lyman Street between Centre and Willow Streets (5-0).

#33-06

CANDACE HAVENS requesting consideration of

1. “Live Parking” zones on Union Street and Braeland Avenue approximately 12 spaces total) in front of Newton Centre “T” Stop from 4:30-6:30 PM to eliminate double-parking and improve drop-off and pick-up of transit riders; includes relocation of handicap parking space on Union Street to opposite side of street
2. 12-hour parking meters in unmetered section of Braeland Avenue from Herrick Road to Langley Road.

ACTION:
NOTE:

APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0

Candace Havens described the area surrounding the Newton Centre “T” stop. Cars double-park on the Union Street side while they wait for passengers, especially in the afternoon. At the same time of day on Braeland Street, there are very few cars due to the 4-6 pm restriction and the taxi stand by the back steps is often unused. She recommended a “Live Parking” zone in front of the station on Union Street to give drivers a place to wait for passengers without obstructing the flow of traffic and another zone on the Braeland side of the tracks to allow for pick-up of passengers arriving on that side of the tracks. She expected these changes would result in less traffic and congestion on Union Street. A turnover and license plate study of the cars parked on Braeland Street showed that six one-hour metered parking spaces are used sporadically and the unrestricted parking spaces are well-used mostly for short periods of time. These spaces are closest to the “T” and slightly farther from the activity centers and could provide employee or commuter parking, but the afternoon restriction discourages such use. She also noted that employees park on Union Street and Langley Road and take up convenient customer spaces.

Clint Schuckel recorded 3700 cars a day (197 cars/hour at PM peak) on Union Street and 1700 cars a day (301 cars/hour at PM peak) on Braeland Avenue between Langley and Herrick Roads from April 12-14. He made similar observations about the usage of spaces on Braeland and Union Streets as Chair Havens. He felt both streets could benefit from small “live parking” zones and long-term meters.

David Koses expressed concerns about commuters from other areas being attracted to new long-term meters, especially since the new daily parking rate at the Woodland station is \$4.50 and long-term City meters are \$3 a day. Traffic Council members mentioned possible ways to regulate this, such as creating permit lots or passes for long-term spaces that give price breaks to local users.

David Koses mentioned that the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities has not reviewed the request for relocation of the handicap space in the "Live Parking" zone on Union Street, but noted that placing it nearest the beginning of the handicap ramp at the corner of Union Street and Herrick Road would be a better location. In keeping with the adopted guidelines for handicap parking requests, a separate item will be docketed for consideration of a new location for the handicap parking space for review by the Mayor's Committee before the Traffic Council takes final action.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend approval of:

- (1) Four "Live Parking" spaces on Union Street between the entrances to the Newton Centre "T" stop from 4:30 to 6:30 pm (5-0);
- (2) Four "Live Parking" spaces on Braeland Street behind the Newton Centre "T" stop east of the stairway/crosswalk (5-0);
- (3) 12-hour metered parking on the entire north side of Braeland Avenue to replace six 1-hour meters and about 23 unrestricted spaces (5-0).

#34-06 CANDACE HAVENS requesting to change 37 short-term metered parking spaces to long-term parking spaces in the Pelham Street Parking lot. Request to change 12 short-term metered parking spaces to long-term parking spaces in Pleasant Street parking lot.

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0**

NOTE: Candace Havens said the existing long-term spaces are better used than the short-term spaces in these lots and she recommended converting some short-term spaces to help meet the need for long-term parking in the area.

Clint Schuckel said there are 89 parking spaces in the Pelham Street lot of which 21 are long-term spaces, and 77 spaces in the Pleasant Street lot of which 43 are long-term spaces. He observed full usage of existing long-term spaces and less use of 3-hour meters in the lots. He recommended the numbers of long-terms be revised to more evenly distribute long- and short-term spaces in the respective lots and to more easily distinguish parking for customers and long-term users. To do this, he suggested changing 7 long-term spaces to short-term spaces in the Pleasant Street and converting 19 short-term to long-term in the Pelham Street lot, for a total increase of 12 long-term parking spaces.

Neighbor, Ernest Siciliano presented some car counts from the Pelham and Pleasant Street lots that indicated nearly full utilization around midday. He asked that no more long-term spaces be created so more spaces could be available for customers.

Neighbor, Polly Sullivan was concerned that adding more long-term spaces would invite commuters from elsewhere. In response to her concerns, Candace Havens noted that license plate studies of the lot were inconclusive; although most cars

parked in the long-term spaces are from Newton, the local employees and commuters could not be distinguished from each other in the study. To address this concern, she suggested keeping long-term parking rates competitive with MBTA rates and/or creating long-term lots in which priority pricing could be offered to local users and regular monitoring of parking behaviors.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend converting 7 long-term spaces to short-term spaces in the Pleasant Street lot and changing 19 short-term spaces to long-term spaces in the Pelham Street lots (5-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair
Traffic Council